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RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0360
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0339
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0338
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0332
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000348

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2017

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SUBJECT: IJAW RULER: ATTACKS WILL CONTINUE 2-3 MONTHS AS
OBASANJO'S "SEND OFF"

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary: A paramount Ijaw Ruler from Warri, Delta State, described the recent spate of militant attacks as a "send off" gift for President Obasanjo and a warning to the incoming Administration that Niger Delta Ijaws would not abide the status quo. "Jomo Gbomo" and "Cynthia White" are spokespersons for criminals, he said. He referred to Tom Polo as the "real" Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), characterizing Polo's fight against local government theft of community monies and federal government's failure to share resources as "bona fide" grievances. End Summary.

Militant Attacks: President Obasanjo's Send Off

2. (C) On May 8, Poloffs met His Royal Majesty Pere ("Pere" means king in Ijaw) Charles E. Ayemi-Botu, Paramount Ruler of the Seimbiri Kingdom of Burutu near Warri, Delta State. Ayemi-Botu is the National Executive Chairman of the Traditional Rulers of Oil Mineral Producing Communities of Nigeria (TROMPCON). Ayemi-Botu castigated Nigerian leaders for not developing the Niger Delta. He quipped that

President Obasanjo's Administration "gave with its right arm and took with its left." Disregard for and abandonment of Niger Delta indigenes has fueled legitimate grievances as well as militant and criminal attacks, he said.

13. (C) Burutu local government area (LGA) is one of the richest producing areas in Delta State, third after the Warri Southwest and Warri North LGAs, with approximately 12 percent of the state's oil. The community gains very little from the yields, Ayemi-Botu said. The LGA, whose Chairman was a boat driver before he was selected for the position, enriches itself at the expense of the people.

14. (C) Before money is distributed to the communities, the funds are divided among the local government council chairman and the council members, the Pere said. Every month, the LGA Chairman visits Lagos to "settle" the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The EFCC in Abuja is "alright", he said, but the EFCC in Lagos is corrupt and demands between 5-10 million naira (approximately USD 40,000-80,000) every month from the LGA. In exchange, it turns a blind eye to the plunder.

15. (C) The Ijaws have been systematically discriminated against, asserted Ayemi-Botu. Oil-bearing lands were carved from Delta State and given unilaterally by President Obasanjo to Ondo State to assure it would become one of Nigeria's oil producing states and share in oil revenues. The Olokola Oil Free Trade Zone, originally planned for the Escravos area in Delta State, was shifted by President Obasanjo to the border of Ondo and Ogun states, Pere Charles grouched. Only the Itsekiri and Urhobo benefit from Chevron's Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMOU) for Escravos, he alleged.

16. (C) Ayemi-Botu said the Ijaw actively struggle against
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the injustices of the Niger Delta. He recounted a Nigerian adage which says, "If a Nigerian man says he will do something this morning, it may not happen this morning, but it will happen by noon." He related the adage to imply the militant threats should be taken seriously, although the timetable the militants have for execution of their activities is susceptible to significant slippage. Pere Charles believed Niger Delta militants would continue to attack multinational companies in the region. He described these attacks as the militants' "send off" gift to President Obasanjo and a warning to the successor administration. He predicted the attacks would continue for two to three months, after which things would again quiet down.

17. (C) Pere Charles described the problems racking the Ijaw community. His people have no potable water source and no electrical power. The lack of sanitation facilities results in further contamination of the riverine areas as the egesta mixes with pollution from nearby oil wells. The death rate from water borne illness is high, he said, with the death rate for children three times that of adults.

Tom Polo's Grievances Bona Fide

18. (C) The well-known militant sobriquets "Jomo Gbomo" and "Cynthia White" are "stage names," he scoffed. He found it humorous some people thought it possible a woman could speak on behalf of thousands of male militants. Both "Jomo Gbomo" and "Cynthia White" are the mouth pieces of loosely structured criminal groups. However, he described the "real" Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as those militants led by Tom Polo. Ayemi-Botu claimed Tom Polo was the head of an organization composed of thousands of armed and fairly disciplined men. MEND's bona fide grievances include local government's theft of community monies and the federal government's selfish control of resources, the Pere said.

¶9. (C) Pere Charles admitted developing the Niger Delta would be an arduous and expensive task. When he built his new palace in 2004, he commissioned a 1,000 foot borehole. However, this depth was insufficient to reach fresh water and local construction companies could not dig any deeper. The Pere said he had to hire Italian oil giant Agip to dig a borehole over 2,000 feet deep.

Comment

¶10. (C) Ayemi-Botu severely criticized the government's failure to develop the Niger Delta. Nonetheless, as is the case with many Niger Delta indigenes, he showed little insight as to ideas on how to make federal, state and local governments work more accountably to provide public services to their people. Exposure to such models could help direct in a more positive direction the discourse between Niger Delta inhabitants and the three tiers of Nigerian government.
End Comment.

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BROWNE